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[54] **BACILLUS THURINGIENSIS ISOLATE ACTIVE AGAINST HYMENOPTERAN PESTS AND GENE(S) ENCODING HYMENOPTERAN-ACTIVE TOXINS**

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[52] U.S. Cl. **435/252.5; 424/93 L; 435/832; 530/350**

[58] Field of Search **424/93 L; 530/350; 435/252.5, 832**

[56] **References Cited**

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[57] **ABSTRACT**

The subject invention concerns novel microbes and genes encoding novel toxin proteins with activity against insect pests of the order Hymenoptera. Pests in the order Hymenoptera are common house pests, and they create problems in hospitals, the food industry and in agriculture. The novel *Bacillus thuringiensis* microbe of the invention is referred to as B.t. PS211B2. The spores or crystals of these microbes, or mutants thereof, are useful to control hymenopteran pests in various environments. The genes of the invention can be used to transform various hosts wherein the novel toxic proteins can be expressed.

9 Claims, 1 Drawing Sheet

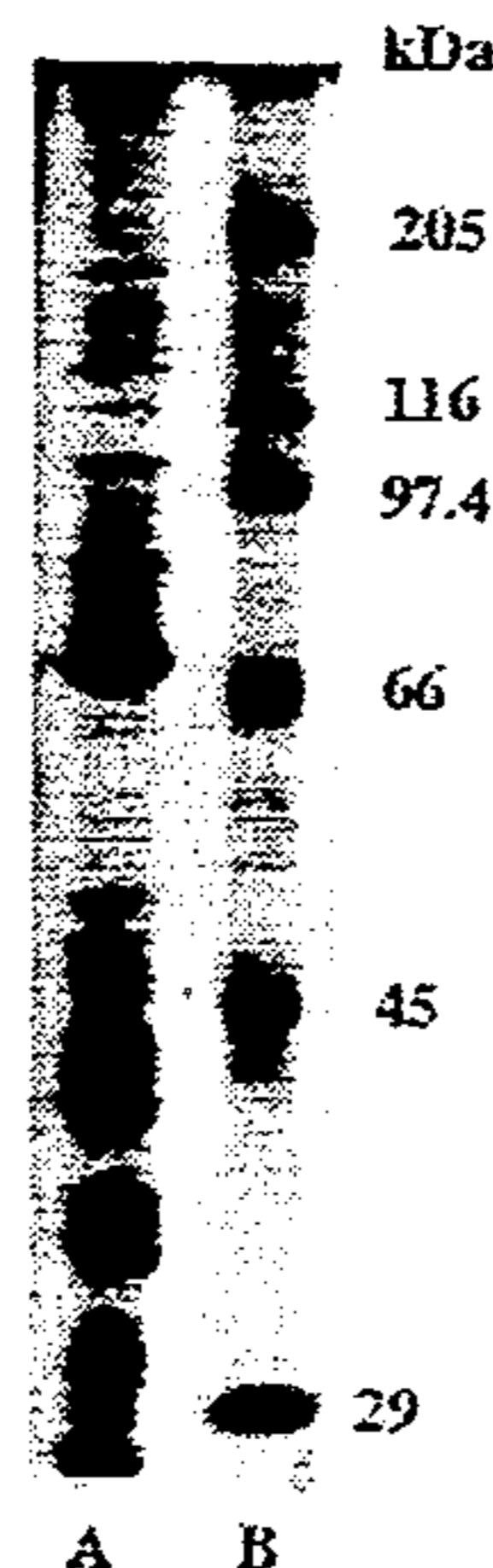
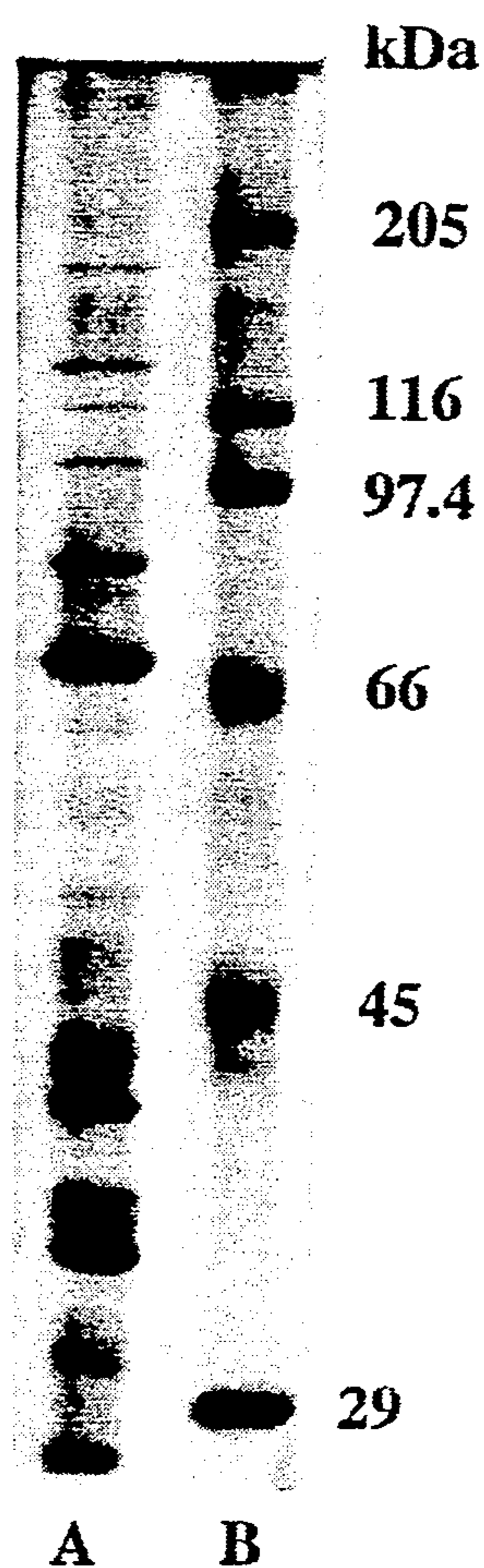


Figure 1



A. *Bacillus thuringiensis* PS211B2
B. Protein Standard

BACILLUS THURINGIENSIS ISOLATE ACTIVE AGAINST HYMENOPTERAN PESTS AND GENE(S) ENCODING HYMENOPTERAN-ACTIVE TOXINS

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Bacillus thuringiensis (B.t.) produces an insect toxin designated as δ -endotoxin. It is synthesized by the B.t. sporulating cell. The toxin, upon being ingested in its crystalline form by susceptible insects, is transformed into biologically active moieties by the insect gut juice proteases. The primary target is insect cells of the gut epithelium, which are rapidly destroyed.

The reported activity spectrum of B.t. covers insect species within the order Lepidoptera, many of which are major pests in agriculture and forestry. The activity spectrum also includes the insect order Diptera, which includes mosquitos and black flies. See Couch, T. L. (1980) "Mosquito Pathogenicity of *Bacillus thuringiensis* var. *israelensis*," *Developments in Industrial Microbiology* 22: 61-76; Beegle, C. C., (1978) "Use of Entomogenous Bacteria in Agroecosystems," *Developments in Industrial Microbiology* 20: 97-104. Krieg, et al., *Z. ang. Ent.* (1983) 96: 500-508, describe a B.t. isolate named *Bacillus thuringiensis* var. *tenebrionis*, which is reportedly active against two beetles in the order Coleoptera. These are the Colorado potato beetle, *Lepidotarsa decemlineata*, and *Agelastica alni*. In European Patent Application No. 0 202 739 there is disclosed a novel B.t. isolate active against Coleoptera. It is known as *B. thuringiensis* var. *san diego* (B.t.sd.). U.S. Pat. No. 4,966,765 discloses the coleopteran-active *Bacillus thuringiensis* isolate B.t. PS86B1.

Ants comprise a large group of insects (Family Formicidae) from the taxonomic order, Hymenoptera. They are among the most common house pests. In many situations, ants are a nuisance pest. Foraging ants create problems with hygiene in hospitals and the food industry. Ants also create problems in agriculture. Damage can be caused by direct feeding on plants. Harvester and fire ants are commonly associated with this type of damage (Holldobler, B. and Wilson, E. O. 1990. *The Ants*, Belkap Press, Cambridge, Mass. 732p.). Some ants cause indirect damage by nurturing and protecting sap feeding insects such as mealybugs and aphids. Ants, particularly in the genus *Solenopsis* are capable of producing extremely painful stings to humans. It has been estimated that approximately 10,000 stings occur each year (Habermehl, G. G. 1981, *Venomous Animals and Their Toxins*, Springer-Verlag, New York, 195 p.). The Pharoah ant (*Monomorium pharoanis*) is primarily an urban pest. However, this species can also be an agricultural pest and damage to corn has been noted (Ebeling, W. 1978. *Urban Entomology*, UC Press, Berkely, Calif., 695p.).

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The subject invention concerns a novel *Bacillus thuringiensis* (B.t.) isolate and genes therefrom which encode novel hymenopteran-active proteins. The novel B.t. isolate, known herein as *Bacillus thuringiensis* PS211B2 (B.t. PS211B2) has been shown to be active against the Pharoah ant (*Monomorium pharoanis*).

The subject invention also includes mutants of the above isolate which have substantially the same pesticidal properties as the parent isolate. Procedures for making mutants are well known in the microbiological art.

Ultraviolet light and nitrosoguanidine are used extensively toward this end.

Further, the invention also includes the treatment of substantially intact cells of the novel isolate, and recombinant cells containing the genes from the isolate, to prolong the pesticidal activity when the substantially intact cells are applied to the environment of a target pest. Such treatment can be by chemical or physical means, or a combination of chemical or physical means, so long as the technique does not deleteriously affect the properties of the pesticide, nor diminish the cellular capability in protecting the pesticide. The treated cell acts as a protective coating for the pesticidal toxin. The toxin becomes available to act as such upon ingestion by a target insect.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1—Photograph of a Standard SDS Polyacrylamide Gel showing alkali-soluble proteins of B.t. PS211B2 compared to a protein standard.

DETAILED DISCLOSURE OF THE INVENTION

The novel *Bacillus thuringiensis* isolate of the subject invention has the following characteristics in its biologically pure form;

Characteristics of B.t. PS211B2

Colony morphology—Large colony, dull surface, typical B.t.

Vegetative cell morphology—typical B.t.

Culture methods—typical for B.t.

Inclusions—large amorphous

Approximate molecular weight of alkali-soluble proteins (kDa)—175, 130, 100, 83, 69, 43, 40, 36, 35, 34 and 27.

A comparison of the characteristics of *B. thuringiensis* PS211B2 (B.t. PS211B2), *B. thuringiensis* var. *kurstaki* (HD-1) and *B. thuringiensis* var. *san diego* (B.t.sd.) is shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1

	Comparison of B. t. PS211B2, B. t. HD-1 and B. t. sd.		
	B. t. PS211B2	B. t. HD-1	B. t. sd.
Inclusions:	Large amorphous	Bipyramid	Flat square
Approximate molecular wt. of proteins by SDS-PAGE	175, 130, 100, 83, 69, 43, 40, 36, 35, 34 and 27	130 and 68	72 and 64
Host range	Hymenoptera	Lepidoptera	Coleoptera (Colorado Potato Beetle)

The culture disclosed in this application has been deposited in the Agricultural Research Service Patent Culture Collection (NRRL), Northern Regional Research Center, 1815 North University Street, Peoria, Ill. 61604, USA.

Culture	Repository No.	Deposit date
<i>Bacillus thuringiensis</i> PS211B2	NRRL B-18921	November 15, 1991

The subject culture has been deposited under conditions that assure that access to the culture will be available during the pendency of this patent application to one determined by the Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks to be entitled thereto under 37 CFR 1.14 and 35 U.S.C. 122. The deposit is available as required

by foreign patent laws in countries wherein counterparts of the subject application, or its progeny, are filed. However, it should be understood that the availability of a deposit does not constitute a license to practice the subject invention in derogation of patent rights granted by governmental action.

Further, the subject culture deposit will be stored and made available to the public in accord with the provisions of the Budapest Treaty for the Deposit of Microorganisms, i.e., it will be stored with all the care necessary to keep it viable and uncontaminated for a period of at least five years after the most recent request for the furnishing of a sample of a deposit, and in any case, for a period of at least thirty (30) years after the date of deposit or for the enforceable life of any patent which may issue disclosing the cultures. The depositor acknowledges the duty to replace the deposit should the depository be unable to furnish a sample when requested, due to the condition of the deposit. All restrictions on the availability to the public of the subject culture deposit will be irrevocably removed upon the granting of a patent disclosing it.

The B.t. isolate of the invention can be cultured using standard art media and fermentation techniques. Upon completion of the fermentation cycle, the bacteria can be harvested by first separating the B.t. spores and crystals from the fermentation broth by means well known in the art. The recovered B.t. spores and crystals can be formulated into a wettable powder, liquid concentrate, granules, or other formulations by the addition of surfactants, dispersants, inert carriers and other components to facilitate handling and application for particular target pests. These formulation and application procedures are all well known in the art.

Formulated products can be sprayed or applied as baits to control hymenopteran pests.

The B.t. cells of the invention can be treated prior to formulation to prolong the pesticidal activity when the cells are applied to the environment of a target pest. Such treatment can be by chemical or physical means, or by a combination of chemical and/or physical means, so long as the technique does not deleteriously affect the properties of the pesticide, nor diminish the cellular capability in protecting the pesticide. Examples of chemical reagents are halogenating agents, particularly halogens of atomic no. 17-80. More particularly, iodine can be used under mild conditions and for sufficient time to achieve the desired results. Other suitable techniques include treatment with aldehydes, such as formaldehyde and glutaraldehyde; anti-infectives, such as zephiran chloride; alcohols, such as isopropyl and ethanol; various histologic fixatives, such as Bouin's fixative and Helly's fixative (See: Humason, Gretchen. L., Animal Tissue Techniques, W. H. Freeman and Company, 1967); or a combination of physical (heat) and chemical agents that prolong the activity of the toxin produced in the cell when the cell is applied to the environment of the target pest(s). Examples of physical means are short wavelength radiation such as gamma-radiation and X-radiation, freezing, UV irradiation, lyophilization, and the like.

Genes encoding toxins having activity against the target susceptible pests can be isolated from the B.t. isolate of the invention by use of well known procedures.

The toxin genes of the subject invention can be introduced into a wide variety of microbial hosts. Expression of the toxin gene results, directly or indirectly, in the

intracellular production and maintenance of the pesticide. With suitable hosts, e.g., *Pseudomonas*, the microbes can be applied to the sites of hymenopteran insects where they will proliferate and be ingested by the insects. The result is a control of the unwanted insects. Alternatively, the microbe hosting the toxin gene can be treated under conditions that prolong the activity of the toxin produced in the cell. The treated cell then can be applied to the environment of target pest(s). The resulting product retains the toxicity of the B.t. toxin.

Where the B.t. toxin gene is introduced via a suitable vector into a microbial host, and said host is applied to the environment in a living state, it is essential that certain host microbes be used. Microorganism hosts are selected which are known to occupy the "phytosphere" (phylloplane, phyllosphere, rhizosphere, and/or rhizoplane) of one or more crops of interest. These microorganisms are selected so as to be capable of successfully competing in the particular environment (crop and other insect habitats) with the wild-type microorganisms, provide for stable maintenance and expression of the gene expressing the polypeptide pesticide, and, desirably, provide for improved protection of the pesticide from environmental degradation and inactivation.

A large number of microorganisms are known to inhabit the phylloplane (the surface of the plant leaves) and/or the rhizosphere (the soil surrounding plant roots) of a wide variety of important crops. These microorganisms include bacteria, algae, and fungi. Of particular interest are microorganisms, such as bacteria, e.g., genera *Pseudomonas*, *Erwinia*, *Serratia*, *Klebsiella*, *Xanthomonas*, *Streptomyces*, *Rhizobium*, *Rhodopseudomonas*, *Methylophilus*, *Agrobacterium*, *Acetobacter*, *Lactobacillus*, *Arthrobacter*, *Azotobacter*, *Leucostoc*, and *Alcaligenes*; fungi, particularly yeast, e.g., genera *Saccharomyces*, *Cryptococcus*, *Kluyveromyces*, *Sporobolomyces*, *Rhodotorula*, and *Aureobasidium*. Of particular interest are such phytosphere bacterial species as *Pseudomonas syringae*, *Pseudomonas fluorescens*, *Serratia marcescens*, *Acetobacter xylinum*, *Agrobacterium tumefaciens*, *Rhodopseudomonas spheroides*, *Xanthomonas campestris*, *Rhizobium melioli*, *Alcaligenes entrophus*, and *Azotobacter vinlandii*; and phytosphere yeast species such as *Rhodotorula rubra*, *R. glutinis*, *R. marina*, *R. aurantiaca*, *Cryptococcus albidus*, *C. diffluens*, *C. laurentii*, *Saccharomyces rosei*, *S. pretoriensis*, *S. cerevisiae*, *Sporobolomyces roseus*, *S. odor*, *Kluyveromyces veronae* and *Aureobasidium pollulans*. Of particular interest are the pigmented microorganisms.

A wide variety of ways are available for introducing the B.t. gene expressing the toxin into the microorganism host under conditions which allow for stable maintenance and expression of the gene. One can provide for DNA constructs which include the transcriptional and translational regulatory signals for expression of the toxin gene, the toxin gene under their regulatory control and a DNA sequence homologous with a sequence in the host organism, whereby integration will occur, and/or a replication system which is functional in the host, whereby integration or stable maintenance will occur.

The transcriptional initiation signals will include a promoter and a transcriptional initiation start site. In some instances, it may be desirable to provide for regulative expression of the toxin, where expression of the toxin will only occur after release into the environment. This can be achieved with operators or a region binding

to an activator or enhancers, which are capable of induction upon a change in the physical or chemical environment of the microorganisms. For example, a temperature sensitive regulatory region may be employed, where the organisms may be grown up in the laboratory without expression of a toxin, but upon release into the environment, expression would begin. Other techniques may employ a specific nutrient medium in the laboratory, which inhibits the expression of the toxin, where the nutrient medium in the environment would allow for expression of the toxin. For translational initiation, a ribosomal binding site and an initiation codon will be present.

Various manipulations may be employed for enhancing the expression of the messenger, particularly by using an active promoter, as well as by employing sequences, which enhance the stability of the messenger RNA. The initiation and translational termination region will involve stop codon(s), a terminator region, and optionally, a polyadenylation signal.

In the direction of transcription, namely in the 5' to 3' direction of the coding or sense sequence, the construct will involve the transcriptional regulatory region, if any, and the promoter, where the regulatory region may be either 5' or 3' of the promoter, the ribosomal binding site, the initiation codon, the structural gene having an open reading frame in phase with the initiation codon, the stop codon(s), the polyadenylation signal sequence, if any, and the terminator region. This sequence as a double strand may be used by itself for transformation of a microorganism host, but will usually be included with a DNA sequence involving a marker, where the second DNA sequence may be joined to the toxin expression construct during introduction of the DNA into the host.

By a marker is intended a structural gene which provides for selection of those hosts which have been modified or transformed. The marker will normally provide for selective advantage, for example, providing for biocide resistance, e.g., resistance to antibiotics or heavy metals; complementation, so as to provide prototrophy to an auxotrophic host, or the like. Preferably, complementation is employed, so that the modified host may not only be selected, but may also be competitive in the field. One or more markers may be employed in the development of the constructs, as well as for modifying the host. The organisms may be further modified by providing for a competitive advantage against other wild-type microorganisms in the field. For example, genes expressing metal chelating agents, e.g., siderophores, may be introduced into the host along with the structural gene expressing the toxin. In this manner, the enhanced expression of a siderophore may provide for a competitive advantage for the toxin-producing host, so that it may effectively compete with the wild-type microorganisms and stably occupy a niche in the environment.

Where no functional replication system is present, the construct will also include a sequence of at least 50 basepairs (bp), preferably at least about 100 bp, and usually not more than about 1000 bp of a sequence homologous with a sequence in the host. In this way, the probability of legitimate recombination is enhanced, so that the gene will be integrated into the host and stably maintained by the host. Desirably, the toxin gene will be in close proximity to the gene providing for complementation as well as the gene providing for the competitive advantage. Therefore, in the event that a

toxin gene is lost, the resulting organism will be likely to also lose the complementing gene and/or the gene providing for the competitive advantage, so that it will be unable to compete in the environment with the gene retaining the intact construct.

A large number of transcriptional regulatory regions are available from a wide variety of microorganism hosts, such as bacteria, bacteriophage, cyanobacteria, algae, fungi, and the like. Various transcriptional regulatory regions include the regions associated with the trp gene, lac gene, gal gene, the lambda left and right promoters, the tac promoter, the naturally-occurring promoters associated with the toxin gene, where functional in the host. See for example, U.S. Pat. Nos. 4,332,898, 4,342,832 and 4,356,270. The termination region may be the termination region normally associated with the transcriptional initiation region or a different transcriptional initiation region, so long as the two regions are compatible and functional in the host.

Where stable episomal maintenance or integration is desired, a plasmid will be employed which has a replication system which is functional in the host. The replication system may be derived from the chromosome, an episomal element normally present in the host or a different host, or a replication system from a virus which is stable in the host. A large number of plasmids are available, such as pBR322, pACYC184, RSF1010, pRO1614, and the like. See for example, Olson et al., (1982) J. Bacteriol. 150:6069, and Bagdasarian et al., (1981) Gene 16:237, and U.S. Pat. Nos. 4,356,270, 4,362,817, and 4,371,625.

The B.t. gene can be introduced between the transcriptional and translational initiation region and the transcriptional and translational termination region, so as to be under the regulatory control of the initiation region. This construct will be included in a plasmid, which will include at least one replication system, but may include more than one, where one replication system is employed for cloning during the development of the plasmid and the second replication system is necessary for functioning in the ultimate host. In addition, one or more markers may be present, which have been described previously. Where integration is desired, the plasmid will desirably include a sequence homologous with the host genome.

The transformants can be isolated in accordance with conventional ways, usually employing a selection technique, which allows for selection of the desired organism as against unmodified organisms or transferring organisms, when present. The transformants then can be tested for pesticidal activity.

Suitable host cells, where the pesticide-containing cells will be treated to prolong the activity of the toxin in the cell when the then treated cell is applied to the environment of target pest(s), may include either prokaryotes or eukaryotes, normally being limited to those cells which do not produce substances toxic to higher organisms, such as mammals. However, organisms which produce substances toxic to higher organisms could be used, where the toxin is unstable or the level of application sufficiently low as to avoid any possibility of toxicity to a mammalian host. As hosts, of particular interest will be the prokaryotes and the lower eukaryotes, such as fungi. Illustrative prokaryotes, both Gram-negative and -positive, include Enterobacteriaceae, such as Escherichia, Erwinia, Shigella, Salmonella, and Proteus; Bacillaceae; Rhizobiceae, such as Rhizobium; Spirillaceae, such as photobacterium, Zy-

momonas, Serratia, Aeromonas, Vibrio, Desulfovibrio, Spirillum; Lactobacillaceae; Pseudomonadaceae, such as Pseudomonas and Acetobacter; Azotobacteraceae and Nitrobacteraceae. Among eukaryotes are fungi, such as Phycomycetes and Ascomycetes, which includes yeast, such as Saccharomyces and Schizosaccharomyces; and Basidiomycetes yeast, such as Rhodotorula, Aureobasidium, Sporobolomyces, and the like.

Characteristics of particular interest in selecting a host cell for purposes of production include ease of introducing the B.t. gene into the host, availability of expression systems, efficiency of expression, stability of the pesticide in the host, and the presence of auxiliary genetic capabilities. Characteristics of interest for use as a pesticide microcapsule include protective qualities for the pesticide, such as thick cell walls, pigmentation, and intracellular packaging or formation of inclusion bodies; leaf affinity; lack of mammalian toxicity; attractiveness to pests for ingestion; ease of killing and fixing without damage to the toxin; and the like. Other considerations include ease of formulation and handling, economics, storage stability, and the like.

Host organisms of particular interest include yeast, such as Rhodotorula sp., Aureobasidium sp., Saccharomyces sp., and Sporobolomyces sp.; phylloplane organisms such as Pseudomonas sp., Erwinia sp. and Flavobacterium sp.; or such other organisms as Escherichia, Lactobacillus sp., Bacillus sp., Streptomyces sp., and the like. Specific organisms include *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, *Pseudomonas fluorescens*, *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*, *Bacillus thuringiensis*, *Escherichia coli*, *Bacillus subtilis*, *Streptomyces lividans*, and the like.

The cell will usually be intact and be substantially in the proliferative form when treated, rather than in a spore form, although in some instances spores may be employed.

Treatment of the recombinant microbial cell can be done as disclosed infra. The treated cells generally will have enhanced structural stability which will enhance resistance to environmental conditions. Where the pesticide is in a proform, the method of inactivation should be selected so as not to inhibit processing of the proform to the mature form of the pesticide by the target pest pathogen. For example, formaldehyde will crosslink proteins and could inhibit processing of the proform of a polypeptide pesticide. The method of inactivation or killing retains at least a substantial portion of the bioavailability or bioactivity of the toxin.

The cellular host containing the B.t. insecticidal gene may be grown in any convenient nutrient medium, where the DNA construct provides a selective advantage, providing for a selective medium so that substantially all or all of the cells retain the B.t. gene. These cells may then be harvested in accordance with conventional ways. Alternatively, the cells can be treated prior to harvesting.

The B.t. cells may be formulated in a variety of ways. They may be employed as wettable powders, baits, granules or dusts, by mixing with various inert materials, such as inorganic minerals (phyllosilicates, carbonates, sulfates, phosphates, and the like) or botanical materials (powdered corncobs, rice hulls, walnut shells, and the like). The formulations may include spreader-sticker adjuvants, stabilizing agents, other pesticidal additives, or surfactants. Liquid formulations may be aqueous-based or non-aqueous and employed as foams, gels, suspensions, emulsifiable concentrates, or the like.

The ingredients may include rheological agents, surfactants, emulsifiers, dispersants, or polymers.

The pesticidal concentration will vary widely depending upon the nature of the particular formulation, particularly whether it is a concentrate or to be used directly. The pesticide will be present in at least 1% by weight and may be 100% by weight. The dry formulations will have from about 1-95% by weight of the pesticide while the liquid formulations will generally be from about 1-60% by weight of the solids in the liquid phase. The formulations will generally have from about 10^2 to about 10^4 cells/mg. These formulations will be administered at about 50 mg (liquid or dry) to 1 kg or more per hectare.

The formulations can be applied to the environment of the hymenopteran pest(s), e.g., plants, soil or water, by spraying, dusting, sprinkling, baits or the like.

Following are examples which illustrate procedures, including the best mode, for practicing the invention. These examples should not be construed as limiting. All percentages are by weight and all solvent mixture proportions are by volume unless otherwise noted.

EXAMPLE 1.

Culturing the B.t. Isolate

A subculture of the B.t. isolate can be used to inoculate the following medium, a peptone, glucose, salts medium.

Bacto Peptone	7.5 g/l
Glucose	1.0 g/l
KH ₂ PO ₄	3.4 g/l
K ₂ HPO ₄	4.35 g/l
Salt Solution	5.0 ml/l
CaCl ₂ Solution	5.0 ml/l
<u>Salts Solution (100 ml)</u>	
MgSO ₄ ·7H ₂ O	2.46 g
MnSO ₄ ·H ₂ O	0.04 g
ZnSO ₄ ·7H ₂ O	0.28 g
FeSO ₄ ·7H ₂ O	0.40 g
<u>CaCl₂ Solution (100 ml)</u>	
CaCl ₂ ·2H ₂ O	3.66 g
pH 7.2	

The salts solution and CaCl₂ solution are filter-sterilized and added to the autoclaved and cooked broth at the time of inoculation. Flasks are incubated at 30° C. on a rotary shaker at 200 rpm for 64 hr.

The above procedure can be readily scaled up to large fermentors by procedures well known in the art.

The B.t. spores and crystals, obtained in the above fermentation, can be isolated by procedures well known in the art. A frequently-used procedure is to subject the harvested fermentation broth to separation techniques, e.g., centrifugation.

EXAMPLE 2

Testing of the B.t. Isolate

Broths were tested for the presence of β -exotoxin by a larval house fly bioassay (Campbell, D. P., Dieball, D. E. and Bracket, J. M., 1987, Rapid HPLC assay for the β -exotoxin of *Bacillus thuringiensis*. J. Agric. Food Chem. 35:156-158). Only isolates which tested free of β -exotoxin were used in the assays against ants.

A bait was made consisting of 10% *Bacillus thuringiensis* of the isolate of the invention and CROSSE AND BLACKWELL mint apple jelly. Approximately 100 ants were placed in each plastic test chamber replicate

with the baits. Control experiments were performed with untreated mint apple jelly. Each test was replicated a minimum of 10 times. Mortality was assessed at 7, 14 and 21 days after introduction of the bait to the ants. Results are shown below:

Toxicity of <i>B. thuringiensis</i> PS211B2 Isolate to the Pharaoh Ant (<i>Monomorium pharoensis</i>)	
B. t. Isolate	Percent Mortality (S.D.)*
PS211B2	90.0 (4.0)
Control	3.8 (0.7)

*S.D. = Standard Deviation

EXAMPLE 3

Insertion of Toxin Gene Into Plants

The genes coding for the insecticidal toxin, as disclosed herein, can be inserted into plant cells using the Ti plasmid from *Agrobacter tumefaciens*. Plant cells can then be caused to regenerate into plants (Zambryski, P., Joos, H., Gentello, C., Leemans, J., Van Montague, M. and Schell, J [1983] Cell 32:1033-1043). A particularly useful vector in this regard is pEND4K (Klee, H. J., Yanofsky, M. F. and Nester, E. W. [1985] Bio/Technology 3:637-642). This plasmid can replicate both in plant cells and in bacteria and has multiple cloning sites for passenger genes. The toxin gene, for example, can be inserted into the BamHI site of pEND4K, propagated in *E. coli*, and transformed into appropriate plant cells.

EXAMPLE 4

Cloning of Novel *B. thuringiensis* Genes Into Baculoviruses

The genes of the invention can be cloned into baculoviruses such as *Autographa californica* nuclear polyhedrosis virus (AcNPV). Plasmids can be constructed that contain the AcNPV genome cloned into a commercial cloning vector such as pUC8. The AcNPV genome is modified so that the coding region of the polyhedrin gene is removed and a unique cloning site for a passenger gene is placed directly behind the polyhedrin promoter. Examples of such vectors are pGP-B6874, described by Pennock et al. (Pennock, G. D., Shoemaker, C. and Miller, L. K. [1984] Mol. Cell. Biol. 4:399-406), and pAC380, described by Smith et al. (Smith, G. E., Summers, M. D. and Fraser, M. J. [1983] Mol Cell. Biol. 3:2156-2165). The genes coding for the

protein toxins of the invention can be modified with BamHI linkers at appropriate regions both upstream and downstream from the coding region and inserted into the passenger site of one of the AcNPV vectors.

5 We claim:

1. A process for controlling ant pests which comprises administering to said pests an insect-controlling effective amount of *Bacillus thuringiensis* PS211B2 having the identifying characteristics of NRRL B-18921, including activity against ant pests.

2. The process, according to claim 1, wherein said pest is the Pharaoh ant.

3. A process for controlling ant pests which comprises

15 (1) preparing a bait comprising *Bacillus thuringiensis* PS211B2, or spores or crystals thereof; and
(2) placing said bait in areas visited by ant pests.

4. A process, according to claim 1 or 3, wherein the *Bacillus thuringiensis* cells are treated, while substantially intact, to prolong the pesticidal activity when the substantially intact cells are applied to the environment of said insect pests.

5. A composition of matter comprising *Bacillus thuringiensis* PS211B2, or spores or crystals thereof; in association with an insecticide carrier.

6. A biologically pure culture of *Bacillus thuringiensis* PS211B2, having the identifying characteristics of NRRL B-18921, including activity against ant pests.

7. An isolated and purified B.t. PS211B2 polypeptide toxin active against ant pests, said toxin producible by *Bacillus thuringiensis* PS211B2, having the identifying characteristic of activity against ant pests of NRRL B-18921.

8. Treated, substantially intact unicellular microorganism cells containing an intracellular toxin, which toxin is a result of expression of a *Bacillus thuringiensis* PS211B2 toxin gene which codes for a polypeptide toxin active against ant pests wherein said toxin is producible by *Bacillus thuringiensis* PS211B2, having the identifying characteristic of activity against ant pests of NRRL B-18921, or wherein said cells are treated under conditions which prolong the insecticidal activity when said cells are applied to the environment of a target insect.

9. The cells, according to claim 8, wherein the cells are treated by chemical or physical means to prolong the insecticidal activity in the environment.

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